

## New Ways of Achieving Our Overall Mission: *Key Cross-Agency Programs*

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# New Ways of Achieving Our Overall Mission: Key Cross-Agency Programs

Although EPA and its partners have made substantial progress towards clean air, water, land and food, there are many human health and environmental challenges that cannot be met with traditional media-specific “command and control” approaches. For example, it has been demonstrated that children, American Indians, and minority and low income individuals suffer disproportionately from adverse health effects caused by some environmental conditions. Likewise, not all areas of the country have the same environmental problems or need the same kind of solutions. To address these specific needs as we move forward over the next five years, the Agency has created a number of innovative multimedia programs that rely on the active participation of the affected communities to reduce specific human health and environmental risks in the most effective manner. Similarly, improved customer service has been targeted as an important program that integrates all of our efforts under each of the 10 goals to satisfy our customers and stakeholders.

Specific human health, environmental and customer service commitments for these programs are identified within the objectives or activities under each of the 10 Agency Goals. However, because these cross-Agency programs are critical to achieving our mission, we have chosen to highlight and describe them in this chapter.

*The key cross-agency programs covered in this section are:*

- Health Risks to Children
- National Environmental Performance Partnership System
- Community-Based Environmental Protection
- Indian Programs
- Customer Service
- Environmental Justice

## HEALTH RISKS TO CHILDREN

### *The Children's Health Protection Program and Its Goal*

Administrator Browner announced EPA's National Agenda to Protect Children's Health from Environmental Threats in September 1996, and established a new Office of Children's Health Protection (OCHP). The purpose of EPA's new office is to make the protection of children's



health a fundamental goal of public health and environmental protection in the U.S.

### *Why Protecting Children's Health is Important*

Children today face significant and unique health threats from a range of environmental hazards. They are often more heavily exposed and more vulnerable than adults to toxins in the environment. This includes risks from asthma-exacerbating air pollution, lead-based paint

in older homes, treatment-resistant microbes in drinking water, and persistent chemicals that may cause cancer or induce reproductive or developmental changes. Children's developing immune and nervous systems can be highly vulnerable to disruption by toxins in the environment, and the consequences may be lifelong.

## What Will Be Accomplished

The Agency will work with our partners, especially those in the Department of Health and Human Services, to ensure that children receive the protection they need and deserve, and to help our nation fulfill its obligation to protect future generations. EPA will:

- Ensure that EPA health standards are protective of children, beginning with a review of five of the most significant current EPA standards, and subsequently establishing procedures for review of new standards as they are developed.
- Coordinate children's health issues across the Agency by establishing a new EPA Board on Children's Environmental Health that will assure integration of EPA activities affecting children, and by working with the Agency's Science Policy Council, Regulatory Policy Council, and program and regional offices to coordinate regulatory and other actions that affect children's health.
- Conduct research needed to establish new policies on children's susceptibility and exposure to pollutants to ensure that EPA uses the best information in developing protective measures for children. EPA researchers will work with other federal agencies and academic institutions to identify and expand research on children's health. EPA will develop new, comprehensive policies that address children's cumulative and simultaneous exposures to environmental health threats, and will develop a research agenda on children's environmental health issues.
- Expand EPA's "Community Right-to-Know" and environmental education activities to better cover children's health issues. EPA will carry out a "Family Right-to-Know Initiative" to expand access to vital information about environmental pollution and children's health, so that families can make

informed choices concerning their children's exposure to environmental risks.

- Implement the President's 1997 Executive Order to Protect Children from Environmental Health and Safety Threats. EPA will ensure that new policies, programs, activities, or standards address the unique risks to children presented by environmental health or safety threats.
- Ensure the implementation of the 1997 Declaration on Children's Environmental Health. This Declaration, agreed to by the environment ministers from the G-7 countries and Russia, makes the protection of children's environmental health a high environmental priority within each participating nation.

## How It Will Be Accomplished

*EPA will promote children's health protection in the following ways:*

- Conduct a review of existing standards as candidates for revision in order to identify at least five standards to better address children's health issues.
- Improve the regulatory system by making consideration of children's health protection an intrinsic part of the process of developing regulations.
- Provide input on research budgets, ensure independent peer review of cross-Agency science agendas, and improve linkages between basic research and public health and environmental policies that affect children.
- Serve as an advocate for children's risk issues.
- Identify and expand scientific research on child-specific susceptibility and exposure to environmental pollutants so that the best information can be employed in developing protections for children.
- Provide parents, teachers, and environmental and health professionals with information so they can take individual responsibility for protecting their children from environmental health threats in their homes, schools, and communities.

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- Encourage and assist program and regional offices in forging links with external partners and communities on children's environmental health policy issues.

## **NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE PARTNERSHIP SYSTEM (NEPPS)**

### ***NEPPS and Its Goal***

Most of the nation's environmental laws envision a strong role for state governments in implementing and managing environmental programs. As state environmental authority and management capacity have grown over the past two decades, EPA has delegated primary responsibility to states for implementation of many day-to-day environmental program activities such as issuing permits, conducting compliance and enforcement programs, and monitoring environmental conditions. Direct administration of environmental programs by states, with EPA oversight to ensure compliance with federal statutes and achievement of national objectives, has brought about significant environmental improvement throughout the country. In short, state performance is fundamental to the achievement of EPA's goals and objectives.

### **Why NEPPS is Important**

During the past two decades, environmental and human health protection programs have grown in size, scope, and complexity. Many environmental problems transcend media boundaries, and solutions may require innovative, cross-media approaches. However, traditional media-specific grants for air, water, hazardous waste, and other pollution control activities provide limited flexibility for states to try integrated approaches. Meanwhile, some EPA oversight practices resulted in duplication of effort, burdensome reporting, and unproductive relationships. EPA and states came to recognize that existing arrangements for implementing environmental programs were not as efficient and effective as they could be.

It is within this context that EPA and state officials began a collective effort to reinvent the EPA-state working relationship. After two years of collaboration, EPA and state leaders reached an important milestone in May 1995, when they agreed to establish the National Environmental



Performance Partnership System (NEPPS). Many of the concepts embodied in performance partnerships that had been discussed for years--such as giving states a stronger role in priority setting, focusing scarce resources on the highest priorities, and tailoring the amount and type of EPA oversight to an individual state's performance--were pulled together into a workable, understandable framework. Implementation of performance partnerships began in FY 1997 after an initial pilot year.

The President's "performance partnership" reinvention initiative, announced in February 1995, provides for increased flexibility in how a program is run in exchange for increased accountability for results. In accord with this initiative, EPA has a new performance partnership grant authority that is a critical tool for implementation of the new approach to EPA-state relations. Under this authority, states can now combine funds from multiple EPA grants to address their highest environmental priorities across all media; link program activities more effectively with environmental goals and program outcomes; and carry out innovative pollution prevention, cross media, ecosystem, and community-based strategies.



## What Will Be Accomplished

*The objectives of the National Environmental Performance Partnership System (NEPPS) are to:*

- Target activities where they are likely to achieve the greatest environmental and human health benefits, based on an assessment of environmental conditions and needs.
- Change the way we evaluate environmental and human health programs by increasing the use of actual measures of environmental and health conditions, achieving a better balance with traditional program activity measures.
- Expand the number and type of protection strategies available to include more integrated and flexible approaches such as pollution prevention, ecosystem management, and cross media permitting and compliance assurance.
- Promote greater collaboration in solving environmental problems whereby states and EPA work together more effectively, taking advantage of the relative strengths of each partner.
- Tailor the amount and type of EPA oversight to the strengths and needs of individual states, with less

EPA engagement in more experienced states and more involvement in states with developing programs.

- Understand the results of protection efforts, inform the public about environmental and human health conditions and the strategies for resolving remaining problems, and foster public involvement.

## How This Will Be Accomplished

*EPA will, in collaboration with the States:*

- Develop policies, guidance documents, and training materials as needed to enhance EPA and state capacity to implement elements of the performance partnership system.
- Negotiate performance partnership agreements with states that define the roles and responsibilities of both EPA and states.
- Award performance partnership grants to interested states, providing for flexibility in how environmental programs are carried out with increased accountability for results.
- Continue to refine and use improved measures of environmental and program performance and strive to reduce the state reporting burden.
- Foster EPA and state efforts to make environmental and human health information more available and understandable to the public.
- Evaluate and report nationally on progress in meeting the goals and objectives of performance partnerships.

## COMMUNITY-BASED ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

### *Summary of the Community-Based Environmental Protection Program and Its Goal*

Community-based environmental protection (CBEP) is a main tenet of the Agency's strategy for "reinventing" its approach to environmental protection by considering environmental problems across organizational and legislative boundaries. CBEP is a multimedia approach (sometimes called a "place-based" or ecosystem approach) that helps communities identify environmental problems,

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set priorities, and forge solutions through an open, inclusive process. It integrates environmental protection with human needs, considers long-term ecosystem health, and fosters linkages between economic prosperity and environmental well-being. It encourages communities to create their vision of environmental health and quality of life and to stimulate human activity compatible with that vision.

CBEP has been implemented in varying ways in different places, but it usually includes the following: identifying the geographic area that is the focus of environmental protection efforts (commonly using natural boundaries or ecological features); involving diverse stakeholders in developing a vision, goals, priorities, and strategies; assessing the local ecological, human health, economic, and socio-cultural aspects of the community that relate to the environment; developing a plan to improve these conditions in a sustainable manner; and taking actions to address the place based problems and goals. These actions include a wide array of voluntary, technical, educational, and regulatory activities. CBEP also incorporates monitoring conditions, evaluating results, and redirecting efforts through adaptive management.

The overall goal of CBEP is to protect, restore, and sustain the quality of the nation's land, air, water, and living resources--in each place as a whole--in ways that help ensure long-term social, economic, ecological, and human health benefits for ourselves and future generations.

#### ***Why CBEP is Important***

In the quarter-century since EPA was established, the U.S. has achieved remarkable improvements in environmental quality as a result of federal, state, tribal, and local actions to reduce the level of pollutants in the nation's air, water, and on land. However, these pollutants continue to threaten public health and the environment, and the causes of environmental pollution and ecological degradation today are different from earlier decades--as is the social, political, and economic context in which they occur. These changes require new and innovative solutions to environmental problems.

Today, environmental protection focuses on nonpoint source water pollution, region-wide air pollution, restoration and redevelopment of hazardous waste sites,

urban sprawl, habitat loss, biological diversity, global climate change, and the exchange of pollutants among air, land, and water. Traditional, media-specific "command-and-control" approaches alone will not solve these intractable problems. Government agencies and the public increasingly recognize that all resources in a particular place--air, water, land, and living resources--are interconnected parts of a single system that need to be addressed as a whole at the local level. Not all areas of the country have the same problems or need the same kind of solutions. Effective solutions to environmental problems require the involvement of members of the community to develop the goals and monitor progress toward improving the quality of their lives and environment. Past experiences that demonstrate the success of place- or community-based environmental protection include Congressionally mandated programs (National Estuary Program, Great Lakes, Clean Lakes, Chesapeake Bay) and EPA initiatives and approaches (Regional Geographic Initiative, watershed approach).

#### **What Will Be Accomplished**

Through CBEP, communities will be empowered to address their environmental, economic, and social needs using effective partnerships, improved communication, and greater access to high quality data, information, and tools. EPA objectives for CBEP include:

- Identifying and reducing environmental stressors that affect human health and quality of life.
- Preventing fragmentation and degradation of habitat and restoring its quality.
- Sustaining biodiversity and healthy ecosystem processes at a regional scale.
- Maintaining vibrant, livable, and economically diverse human communities.
- Incorporating community and stakeholder goals and values in the design and implementation of environmental protection initiatives (especially in disproportionately impacted and disadvantaged communities).
- Increasing the number of communities achieving

tangible environmental outcomes through the CBEP approach.

- Incorporating CBEP goals, objectives, principles, strategies, and performance measures into all EPA, state, and tribal policies and program activities.

## How It Will Be Accomplished

*EPA will promote its CBEP approach through three principal strategies:*

- (1) **Reorienting and Building the Capacity of EPA Programs for CBEP.** EPA will implement policy and rule revisions, establish education and training programs, identify and leverage resources, and use other appropriate measures to integrate the principles of CBEP into all Agency programs.
- (2) **Building External Capacity.** EPA will improve community and public access to environmental, economic, and societal data, information, tools, and training for CBEP. In addition, EPA grants will serve as a catalyst for state, tribal, and local CBEP efforts.
- (3) **Working in Priority Places.** EPA will be involved directly with stakeholders through the community-based approach in high-priority locations.

*In taking a CBEP approach, EPA will improve the*

*effectiveness of our environmental programs and regulations. Community-based environmental protection will be implemented through the following actions:*

- Integrating geographically the delivery of our services and programs, such as issuing permits and integrating program-specific data.
- Looking beyond our current statutory authorities and programs to address problems that cannot be solved by our traditional regulatory approach.
- Creating the flexibility to respond to the needs of diverse ecosystems and human communities and help communities reach informed decisions.
- Assessing and managing aggregate data on the quality of air, water, land, and living resources in a locality.
- Ensuring that our programs and activities promote sustainable human, economic, and ecological communities.
- Increasing our efficiency and effectiveness by building partnerships with other federal, state, tribal, and local government agencies; leveraging resources; and developing better ways of informing, assisting and involving the public we serve.

## INDIAN PROGRAM

### *The EPA Indian Program and its Goal*

The EPA Indian Program involves significant cross-Agency and multimedia activities designed to ensure that EPA's Trust responsibility to federally-recognized tribes is carried out by assuring the protection of human health, and the tribal homeland environment, in a manner consistent with a government-to-government relationship and conservation of cultural uses of natural resources.

### Importance Of The Indian Program

The responsibilities of the Indian program include protecting the health of the millions of Indians and non-Indians residing within Indian Country borders, addressing the environmental needs of 562 tribal nations, and safeguarding the natural environment--air, water, and land--of Indian Country. The responsibility held by EPA is critical. American Indians have the worst health statistics



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in the country and, overall, environmental conditions of tribal homelands are substandard. Environmental mitigation in tribal communities is significantly behind that of non-tribal communities. It is imperative that EPA enhance its partnership with the tribes and work with tribes to identify and achieve environmental goals.

#### **What Will Be Accomplished**

*Key objectives within this process are:*

- Achieve adequate environmental infrastructure within tribal homelands throughout the country.
- Complete the Tribal/EPA Environmental Agreements. These agreements contain the tribal environment baseline assessment, tribal environmental priorities identified by the tribal government, and EPA's and tribes' commitments to achieve these priorities.
- Implement fully the 1984 EPA Indian Policy Statement.
- Increase significantly the number of tribes implementing environmental programs.
- Implement environmental programs (federal or tribal) within tribal homelands that meet needs established by tribal environmental baseline assessments.
- Build capacity and adequate internal mechanisms to help tribes implement environmental programs and, in the absence of tribal implementation, establish means for EPA implementation.
- Establish a mechanism, in partnership with tribal and state governments, to resolve transboundary issues.

#### **How It Will Be Accomplished**

*These objectives can be met through a combination of:*

- Increased tribal capacity-building efforts.
- Greater implementation of environmental programs within tribal homelands.
- Expanded education for EPA employees regarding tribal environmental issues.
- Increased technical assistance and training for tribal environmental program managers.
- Continued cross-Agency, multimedia coordination of

Indian program activities by the American Indian Environmental Office.

- Improved coordination with tribes to achieve environmental goals and priorities identified by tribal governments in the Tribal/EPA Environmental Agreements.



## **ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE**

### ***Environmental Justice and Its Goal***

Although EPA has made significant progress in achieving healthier, sustainable environments, we recognize that environmental programs during the past two decades may not always have benefitted all communities or all populations within a community equally. Many minority, low income, and Native American communities have raised concerns that they suffer a disproportionate burden of health consequences due to the siting of multiple pollution sources in their communities. Environmental programs do not adequately address these disproportionate exposures to pesticides, lead or other toxic chemicals at home and on the job. In addition, these communities seem to lack adequate knowledge and representation in public policy and environmental decision-making processes. The goals of the environmental justice program are to ensure that all people, regardless of race or income, are protected from disproportionate impacts of environmental hazards and that the most affected communities have adequate opportunities to participate in environmental processes.

## The Importance of Environmental Justice

In 1994, President Clinton issued Executive Order 12898, which required "each Federal Agency to make achieving environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects of its programs, policies and activities on minority populations and low-income populations." EPA was designated as the lead agency accomplishing this.

## What Will Be Accomplished

*To meet our environmental justice objectives, EPA will:*

- Ensure that communities most disproportionately impacted by toxic releases and hazards receive fair and equal protection under environmental laws.
- Encourage citizens in adversely impacted communities to become fully engaged in environmental decisions affecting them.
- Achieve source reductions in high risk communities.

## How it Will be Accomplished

*EPA over the next five years will:*

- Develop and enhance existing tools to identify communities most disproportionately impacted by toxic releases and hazards.

- Reduce toxic releases and hazards by eliminating sources of pollution and targeting specific activities to reduce toxic exposure, increase enforcement, and cleanup high risk communities.
- Enhance community participation in environmental programs by increasing education, technical, and financial assistance to high risk communities and assessing the effectiveness of communication and participation strategies.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of communities in identifying local environmental issues and participating in the decisions affecting them.
- Continue collaboration and coordination between EPA and other federal agencies, and expand partnership opportunities for addressing environmental justice issues.
- Integrate environmental justice issues into program operations, Regional Memoranda of Agreement, and State Performance Partnership Agreements.



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## CUSTOMER SERVICE PROGRAM

### *The Customer Service Program and its Goal*

EPA seeks ways to provide better customer service as defined by Executive Order 12862, "Setting Customer Service Standards," signed by President Clinton in 1993. EPA's Customer Service Program (CSP) was created to improve the Agency's ability to achieve its mission of protecting human health and the environment by serving the public, industry, state and local agencies, and other customers more efficiently and effectively.

To achieve this goal, the Agency has developed "Rules of Customer Service" that address professionalism, telephone and correspondence response, public involvement, and dealing with partners in service delivery. Customer service standards also are provided to guide activities associated with permitting, rulemaking, enforcement and compliance assistance, partnership programs, public access, research grants, state/tribal and local grants, and pesticides registration. By 2003, all EPA staff will receive needed training and will have achieved the customer service standards that apply to their work.

### **Importance of Improving Customer Service**

Implementing the CSP will establish stronger connections between our employees and their customers, encourage input on what our customers need and value, and improve how we do our work. Listening to customers' needs and opinions will shift our focus to products and services, their outcomes and value to the public, and the quality and value we provide. Over time, shifting to a customer focus will help us reduce dissatisfaction with government and improve efficiency. In essence, good customer service is important because it promotes activities that create efficiency in meeting environmental goals and establishes a culture that not only builds public trust, but also verifies the reasons we are here.

As EPA becomes more focused on customers, we will seek ways to improve staff skills, promote better use of program evaluation and measurement tools, and recognize opportunities to learn from our partners and customers. With customers as our focus, EPA can improve communication and information systems, and train staff to be fully responsive to customer needs. As we improve relationships

with our regulatory partners, the public, industry, and others, EPA can expect to reduce complaints, increase trust in the Agency, and improve staff morale.

### **What Will Be Accomplished**

*The customer service strategy is centered upon five objectives:*

- Helping all EPA employees understand the importance and substantial benefits of improving service to the public.
- Providing employees with goals and guidelines for improvement and involving them in eliminating barriers to achieving standards.
- Training to build capacity, achieve the standards, and apply effective customer-service skills.
- Developing measurement and tracking systems to document improvements in service.
- Learning how to increase satisfaction with our services and our treatment of customers.

### **How It Will Be Accomplished**

To achieve these five objectives, EPA will disseminate information about the standards, their potential impact, and the importance of their implementation. Cross-Agency groups of employees who deal with the public will identify problems and solutions as we implement the new standards. A customer service suggestion e-mail box has been established, and a customer service skills training program is planned. Customer satisfaction surveys will be used to obtain feedback, and their results will be shared widely with employees so they can better meet customer needs. Through a network of other federal agencies and outstanding customer service organizations in the private sector, EPA will identify, adopt, and adapt "best practices" to our own processes.

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